

William O'Neill
525 Gardner St.
Manchester, CT 06040

Dear Co-Chairs Cohen and Gresko, Vice-Chairs Slap and Palm, Ranking Members Miner and Harding, and members of the Environment Committee,

I write to ask you to support Raised House Bill 5291, An Act Authorizing Bonding for Bikeways, Greenways and Recreational Trails.

The least talked about, critically important part of greenway projects is their potential return on investment. There are many published documents regarding trails such as those in Erie Canal, NY, and Pennsylvania that quantify the dollars sent to those states' respective general funds. This information is available from Bruce Donald, the East Coast Greenway Alliance's Southern New England Manager – he may be contacted at bruce@greenway.org.

The 200-mile CT section of the East Coast Greenway is a tourist magnet waiting to be activated. Please fund the millions of dollars of projects waiting to contribute sales tax and beyond from trail users.

This important bill would increase the bond authorization for the Recreational Trails and Greenways Grants program to \$6 million. As you may be aware, in Fall, 2021, DEEP issued a request for recreational trails proposals with only \$3 million available and received 65 applications requesting over \$22 million. The \$3 million was granted to twenty worthy projects, but another \$7 million in highly ranked proposals were unable to be funded, and we expect the ongoing need for investments in Connecticut's outdoor recreation infrastructure to continue.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this matter.

Happy Trails,

Bill O'Neill
CT DEEP Greenway Council, Past Chair, Current Member
East Coast Greenway Alliance, Past Board Member, Current Advisory Committee Member